WE CLAIM:

1.   A method for validating that an identifier is unique within an ad-hoc network of machines, said identifier being associated with an application for execution on one or more of the machines, the method comprising the steps of:

obtaining said identifier;

sending a claim request for said identifier to at least one machine in said network of machines; and

validating said identifier as unique to said application if an invalidation message is not received within a predefined time period, said invalidation message being indicative of said identifier being allocated to one of said machines.

2.   A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said network is a multi-link network.

3.   A method as claimed in claim 1, further characterized by a number of operative machines on the network being unknown.

4.   A method as claimed in claim 2, further characterized by a number of operative machines on the network being unknown.

5.   A method as claimed in claim 2, wherein the step of sending is repeated at least once within said predefined time period.

6.   A method as claimed in claim 2, further characterized by said identifier being validated as unique for a pre-defined duration.

7. A method as claimed in claim 2, wherein the step of sending is characterized by at least one of said machines receiving said claim request and thereafter propagating said claim request to at least one other of said machines.

5

8. A method as claimed in claim 2, wherein said claim request is provided in a claim requesting message that includes said identifier and information identifying said application.

10 9. A method as claimed in claim 2, wherein said validating step is further characterized by one of said machines, operating as a receiving machine, providing said invalidation message if upon receipt of said claim request the receiving machine has a prior claim to said identifier.

15

10. A method as claimed in claim 9, wherein said validating step is further characterized by said invalidation message being routed to said claim requesting machine by use of network addresses.

20 11. A method as claimed in claim 2, wherein during said sending at least one of said machines operates both as a receiving machine that receives said claim request and thereafter operates as a propagating machine thereby sending said invalidation message to at least one other of said machines.

25

12. A method for validating that an identifier is unique within an ad-hoc network of machines, said identifier being associated with an application for execution on one or more of the machines, the method comprising the steps of:

obtaining said identifier;

sending a claim request for said identifier from a claim requesting machine, that is one of said machines, to at least one other machine in said network of machines; and

validating said identifier as unique to said application if said requesting machine does not receive an invalidation message within a predefined time period, said invalidation message being indicative of said identifier being allocated to one of said machines.

13. A method as claimed in claim 12, wherein said network is a multi-link network.

14. A method as claimed in claim 12, further characterized by a number of operative machines on the network being unknown.

15. A method as claimed in claim 13, further characterized by a number of operative machines on the network being unknown.

16. A method as claimed in claim 13, wherein the step of sending is repeated at least once within said predefined time period.

17. A method as claimed in claim 13, further characterized by said identifier being validated as unique for a pre-defined duration.

18. A method as claimed in claim 13, wherein the step of sending is characterized by at least one of said machines receiving said claim request and thereafter propagating said claim request to at least one other of said machines.

19. A method as claimed in claim 13, wherein said claim request is provided in a claim requesting message that includes said identifier and information identifying said application.

20. A method as claimed in claim 13, wherein said validating step is further characterized by one of said machines, operating as a receiving machine, providing said invalidation message if upon receipt of said claim request the receiving machine has a prior claim to said identifier.

21. A method as claimed in claim 20, wherein said validating step is further characterized by said invalidation message being routed to said claim requesting machine by use of network addresses.

22. A method as claimed in claim 13, wherein during said sending at least one of said machines operates both as a receiving machine that receives said claim request and thereafter operates as a propagating machine thereby sending said invalidation message to at least one other of said machines.

23. A claim requesting machine for operation in an ad-hoc network of machines, wherein in use the claim requesting machine effects the steps of:

obtaining an identifier for an application associated with said claim requesting machine;

sending a claim request for to at least one other machine in said network of machines; and

validating said identifier as unique to said application if said requesting machine does not receive an invalidation message within a predefined time period, said invalidation message being indicative of said identifier being allocated to one of said machines.

24   A claim requesting machine as claimed in claim 23, wherein said network is a multi-link network.

25. A method as claimed in claim 23, further characterized by a number of operative machines on the network being unknown.

26.   A method as claimed in claim 24, further characterized by a number of operative machines on the network being unknown.